

Interview
with
GEORGE A. MOODY, JR.

September 30, 1995

Interviewer: Kenneth Steeber

Transcribed by: Joy K. Stiles

Shenandoah National Park

Luray, Virginia

Original manuscript on deposit at
Shenandoah National Park Archives

INDEX

Side A:

George Moody is a former Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee stationed in Shenandoah National Park from October, 1936 to March, 1937. He was stationed at Camp NP-2 at Big Meadows. The interview begins with Moody giving a brief account of his family background. Moody then describes a typical day. He was initially assigned to cutting out dead trees, but was later made a student cook, working in the kitchen. He does not recall any discipline problems in camp but was confident the military-type system could handle any problem that might arise. He described a typical breakfast menu and talked about some other duties enrollees might be given. Moody did not feel there were any hardships associated with being in the CCC.

Moody goes into more detail about his initial assignment removing trees and brush. When asked of his first impressions upon his arrival in the Park, Moody relates his amazement at all the CCC had accomplished to that point. When asked if he remembered anyone specifically, Moody immediately mentions Frank Kiblinger, of Luray, a well respected work crew leader.

Moody found the mountain families to be interesting and easy to get along with. He remembers little wildlife, no deer, and less abundant vegetation than can be seen now. He recalls a variety of recreational activities available for the men. Moody rarely went to Luray, the local town, but did go home on weekend passes when he could.

After he left the CCC, Moody served in the National Guard and the Army, then held a variety of jobs. In retrospect, he sees his time in the CCC as a positive experience.
End of interview.

Key words:

Big Meadows	p.10	vegetation	p. 9
Camp NP-2	p. 2	Weakley family	p. 8
camp life		weather	p. 5
barracks	p. 5	wildlife	p. 9
daily routine	p. 3	work detail	p. 4,6
food	p. 4		
maintenance & grounds	p. 4		
medical services	p. 6		
recreation	p. 12		
rivalries between men	p. 5		
chestnut trees	p. 10-11		
deer	p. 9		
discipline	p. 3		
Kiblinger, Frank	p. 4,8		
mountain families	p. 8		
NP-2	p. 2		

START SIDE A

[Interview conducted on September 30, 1995, at the Ramada Inn, Luray, Virginia]

Kenneth Steeber: This is a Shenandoah National Park oral history interview. I'm Ken Steeber, Park Volunteer, and interviewing George Moody, former Civilian Conservation Corps member. George served in the Corps from October, 1936 to March 1937. History records the policies and purposes of the CCC, but little has been preserved of the human effort that has cemented it together. Much of the human history of the CCC exists only in the memories of those who served. The Shenandoah National Park Archives is preserving these memories through a series of oral history interviews with former CCC recruits. George, I want to thank you for sharing your CCC experience with us today, and I have a list of questions that I'd like to go through, to ask you about what life was like in the CCC. Feel free at any time to express your feelings and try to bring to us the history of the CCC. I'd like to deal first with your personal background. Your full name, of course?

George Moody: George A. Moody, Jr.

KS: Date of birth?

GM: 20th of August, 1920.

KS: Where were you living when you signed up for the CCC?

GM: I was living in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

KS: Now who were you living with at that time? Your parents, sisters--

GM: My parents and two brothers.

KS: How many brothers?

GM: Two, two brothers.

KS: Did you have any sisters?

GM: No sisters.

KS: How did you find out about the CCC?

GM: It was general knowledge in the community about CC camp. Other people had gone into CC's.

KS: Now, why did you join?

GM: Well, probably the adventure of it, and . . .

KS: Of course the program was designed probably to help Depression era people. Were you involved in that?

GM: No, no.

KS: How old were you at the time?

GM: I was 17.

KS: And of course we know how long you served, it was 6 months served.

GM: Six months.

KS: Right. Now, what was the last year of school that you attended? Prior to joining the camp?

[no response]

KS: Okay, we'll move on. Now, what Camp were you assigned to?

GM: Camp 2 [NP-2].

KS: And can you tell us briefly about what camp routine was like? For example, what

time did you have to get up, what your duties were, eating times . . .

GM: Well, we got up 5:30, around that time. Made up our bunk and everything and got ourselves ready to go to breakfast and then we went and had breakfast. Then we got with our work detail, whatever work we were assigned to. My first assignment was with Mr. Kiblinger's gang, and that was cutting logs and stuff. And due to my size, I only worked at that for about a month. Then I took a job as a student cook and worked in the kitchen the rest of the time that I was at the camp. As a student cook, worked as a student cook.

KS: Now, you worked on a work crew?

GM: When I first went there.

KS: Who supervised the work groups?

GM: Civilian leaders, work leaders.

KS: Were they local men?

GM: Local men, from the valley, yup.

KS: Oh, I see. Now, were there many discipline problems here in the camp?

GM: No, I don't recall any problems as far as guys getting out of order and stuff like that.

There probably could have been little incidents, but I didn't know about it.

KS: No problem, no overall problem that you knew about.

GM: No, no.

KS: But if you had any discipline problems, who would have handled those?

GM: Well, I think they would have repaired that problem. It would have started with the leaders and would have went to the commander of the camp. Went up the ladder to the military end of it.

KS: Right, you were--camps were run by the military.

GM: That's right.

KS: Oh, I see. Now, who prepared the food?

GM: The cooks prepared the food. You had a first cook, second cook, third cook, and student cook for, on each, each cooking--you had two teams. They cooked, cooked three days, then you was off a day, and stuff like that. Rotated the cooking.

KS: How would you rate the food, that you got?

GM: Food was good. Very good.

KS: What would be a typical meal that you would have, say, over a week? Would it be repetitive?

GM: Well, in the mornings of course you'd have cereal, you'd have grapefruit, you'd have half a pint of milk, you would have eggs, fried some mornings, scrambled some mornings. You'd have sausage or bacon, and fried potatoes.

KS: I see. Now, personally, how would you rate it?

GM: Very good.

KS: It was good.

GM: Very good.

KS: Okay, who was responsible for the maintenance of the camp? The buildings, and sidewalks, grassed areas?

GM: Well, they had a camp crew, just maintained, get the camp in, uh, you know, kept everything up.

KS: They were enrollees, then?

GM: Right, right.

KS: And how did you heat the barracks, during the wintertime.

GM: They had coal, they had stoves, two stoves to the barracks. And we used coal and could bank the coal at night and keep them warm.

KS: Now, who was responsible for, you know, keeping the fires going?

GM: They had CC guys that were assigned to do that.

KS: Enrollees once again?

GM: Right, to do that.

KS: Now, was there any rivalries between camps? Whether in jest, or serious?

GM: To my knowledge, no. Maybe they, maybe they had little rumors about the basketball team versus another team, or boxer versus another boxer, but nothing serious.

KS: Now, what were some of the hardships of living in camp? You're away from home .

..

GM: Well, other than that fact, which that wasn't so much of a hardship, it really wasn't any hardship. You enjoyed the, you enjoyed what you had so much better than what you had at home at the time, that you were well satisfied.

KS: How about like weather or things like that, as described as a hardship?

GM: Other than getting cold when you worked, and of course you had a lot of warm gloves, shoes, and clothing was warm, it--and you were young enough that you really didn't, uh, that wasn't a really hardship.

KS: What educational classes did you attend while you were in the CCC?

GM: None. They did have that available.

KS: Okay. How would--oh, okay, this question doesn't apply right here. What kind of medical services were available?

GM: Very good. They had doctor, they had a little clinic there that you could go to, on sick call, stuff like that.

KS: Does that include dental services, also?

GM: No, I don't think so. That was available, but not necessarily at camp. They
() Camp 2.

KS: Here's a kind of an all-encompassing question: what part of camp life did you enjoy the most?

GM: I enjoyed it all, really, but they, I enjoyed the opportunity to learn to cook, the fellowship, just camp life itself, I enjoyed.

KS: Actually, going back to the question I had about education provided, you really did take advantage of it. In other words, you took advantage of learning to cook, which was part of the educational program.

GM: Right, right, yeah. This is true. In the sense of self-survival later, I used that when I went in the Army. I also cooked in the Army, so that was from the learning I learnt at CC's.

KS: Good. Now, what I'd like to do, change to now, I want to ask you some questions about work. What was your first job assignment; I think we covered it briefly under camp life, but would you tell us a little bit more about your first job that you were assigned to?

GM: First job, when I got to Big Meadows, was I was assigned to work in the field. It was cutting, helping cut the trees, dead trees down, and clean up after the brush and stuff, and that was every day up until your weekends. That's what you did every day, ().

KS: Now how would you rate the quality of work performed by the CCC?

GM: Very good, very good.

KS: And how about the supervision you received?

GM: Very good.

KS: They were all local men, as you mentioned.

GM: All local.

KS: Did you find them fair?

GM: Fair, and a lot of learning that you could learn from these gentlemen.

KS: How about the assignments, were they well planned?

GM: Well planned, well planned.

KS: You knew what you were going to do and how much you had to accomplish?

GM: Right, right.

KS: Let's go now to your personal experiences, if I may. What was your first impression of the Park?

GM: I was amazed, to be, to see what had been done before I got there. They, of course the road was in its dirt stage at that time. They were still laying rock on curves, and everything. They built, the people before us, the guys that had come to camp before I did, of course they built the barracks and all of that. They first come to Big Meadows in tents, then built barracks.

KS: Do you recall personalities from that time who really stand out in your memory? People you have met, whether they be, you know, fellow enrollees, or officers, or foremen?

GM: Well, one foreman, which was Frank Kiblinger, which lived at the foot of the mountain, I remember him very well.

KS: What county did he live in?

GM: Whatever county, whatever county Luray is in.

KS: Okay, that's Page County.

GM: Page County. And he was a very respected man, and well-liked by everybody. All the guys liked him.

KS: How about, how about officers? The military officers?

GM: Officers was well liked, well liked and no one--I know of no problems--and I never had any personal problems with the officers in any fashion. And it really don't bother anyone else it did, at that time.

KS: What were your impressions of the mountain families?

GM: They were very interesting people and we were interesting to them. By the fact, by the fact that they lived on top of the mountain, versus me living in the flatlands around Petersburg, Virginia, we kind of looked at each other in a different way, I guess. But they were fine people, easy to get along with.

KS: Now, who were some of the mountain residents that you had personal contact with? Do you remember any of those?

GM: Well, there's the Weakley's, fellow by the name of Weakley I knew.

KS: Was that June Weakley?

GM: I don't know, I don't remember that.

KS: That's at Big Meadow, right?

GM: Yeah, in Big Meadow.

KS: There was another family living at Big Meadow, by June Weakley's home. Do you

remember who that was?

GM: Not right offhand.

KS: Okay. Any other families that you remember?

GM: No.

KS: Did you have any other per--you know, talk about personal contact, what was the nature of your contact with them, the mountain people? Casual . . .

GM: Just casual, just casual.

KS: How would you say you were treated by the mountain families?

GM: Fine, no problem.

KS: What do you remember about the animals in the Park?

GM: At that time, I don't recall seeing a lot of animals, like deer, or bear, or anything like that.

KS: Did you ever hear that other people might have seen them?

GM: No, not a whole lot. It wasn't . . . I thought about that, you know, since that time versus now, that you, that you can drive across and see animals any moment. Back then, I don't recall seeing a deer, really, the six months that I was there.

KS: Did you have any camp pets?

GM: I'm sure there was, but I don't recall.

KS: Can you describe the variety of plant life in the Park when you arrived? Like for example, the trees, the wildflowers, berries?

GM: Well, the berries, well, like at Big Meadows, like, you've got the berries out there in that field. I don't recall those berries back then, in the field like they are now. You might find them

scattered in some of the areas you might have been cutting logs in or something, but not like you would see them today out in that Big Meadow field.

KS: Some of the rangers who were aware that we were going to do these interviews had some questions, and if you don't mind, I'd like to throw some of these questions to you now. Especially since you, you know, were up at Big Meadow. The question here is, what did the Big Meadow area look like before the dead chestnut trees were removed?

GM: Well, you just had a bunch of dead trees, just pointing up in the air.

KS: I hear often they refer to them as "ghost forests".

GM: Right, right.

KS: Is that because they were really white?

GM: Yeah, white in color. Yes, bark had gone. The trees was stood like a statue of, you'd make of a . . . like, well, like a ghost, yeah, I think that's a good . . .

KS: How about the meadow? Was it open grassland, or were there bushes and trees in it?

GM: There was, there was some bushes. Not as, not like it is today. It was more grassier, you know, like mowed grass, and some bushes and a few dead chestnut trees on the back side of the field.

KS: They didn't have many dead chestnuts in the Meadow itself, did they?

GM: No, no.

KS: All around the edges?

GM: Around the edges.

KS: I see. If you go up there today, there's a small pond at Big Meadow. Was there a pond there during CCC time?

GM: I don't recall a pond.

KS: Now, while you were there, did the people still graze any livestock in the Meadow?

GM: No, no.

KS: Now, was the Meadow ever mowed or burned while you were there?

GM: No.

KS: Do you remember the nursery, that they planted trees in, near the camp?

GM: No.

KS: Oh, you weren't involved in--

GM: No, in that--

KS: Oh, I see. I think you answered pretty much all the questions that are on here already. You might have touched on this, but let me ask you again: how does the Park compare now to when you first came here? Probably, probably the question I really want to ask is, was it really as barren as a lot of people say it was? Of course, today it's growing quite well, beautiful forests and trees. But how was it when you got here?

GM: It was more barren. In the open areas was more barren than it is today.

KS: But there were also a lot of wooded areas, too?

GM: Yes, there was.

KS: There was. Interesting. Okay, let's move on to recreation, probably the fun part of your life in the camp. What recreation opportunities were available in camp?

GM: Well, in the wintertime, you could go up and check out a pair of skies and try to learn how to ski. Didn't nobody know much about that. Then, course, you had your boxing; you had basketball; in the summer, of course, you had baseball; and different camps, I don't know, shuffled

around and either played against each other and had little boxing deals between each other. Then they had, of course, the movies and they had stuff like that. Of course each place had pool, shooting pool, they had guys that would go to one camp to the other and shoot pool against another camp, and stuff like that. They stayed pretty busy as far as entertainment of that sort.

KS: Now, did you play on any of the CCC sport teams?

GM: No, I was only a mascot of the basketball team. That was the only thing that I got involved in.

KS: How were the teams? Were they any good?

GM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, they had good basketball players.

KS: Now, did you go into the valley communities during your free time?

GM: Maybe in the whole six months I was there, I think I was in Luray six times.

KS: How were you treated?

GM: All right, no problems.

KS: What were some of the recreational activities they had in Luray?

GM: I think the movies, and sort of, uh, walk up and down the street, just window shopping, in a sense of speaking.

KS: Did you date any of the local girls?

GM: No.

KS: And how often were you allowed to go home?

GM: Well, used to go, was able to go if you was off, you had no duties. You could get a pass to go home pretty easily.

KS: Did you go home like weekends, or . . .

GM: Yeah, weekends.

KS: Oh, you got weekend passes.

GM: Yeah, yeah.

KS: What did you do after leaving the CCC?

GM: I joined the National Guard, local national Guard in Leesburg, Virginia. This was in '38 and in '40 we were federalized into federal service.

KS: And you fought in World War II?

GM: Stayed--yeah, stayed in.

KS: What theater operations were you in?

GM: Well, all of my time was in the States. I was at Fort Meade, Maryland, and I pulled () guard duty in Washington, D.C. Then I come out--I was in the Army three years, nine months and twenty-eight days, and I come out on a medical. Was hurt in a truck wreck. ()

KS: I see. What sort of career have you had since the CCC?

GM: Well, I've worked as a sheet metal worker, I've worked as an insulator, I've cooked in commercial cooking, restaurant. That's about the size of it, I guess.

KS: And how do you, how would you think the CCC affected your life?

GM: I think it added a lot to it. It showed me a lot of rights and wrongs, it grew me up, grew a bit faster than I would have grew up otherwise. It kept me out of trouble, chances are. It showed me how to gain responsibility, get out and fend for myself in a proper way. And I guess that's about the size of it.

KS: There's always been a question about bringing the CCC back, offering the same programs to today's youth. What do you think about that?

GM: Well, I think it, I think it definitely need, could be a need for it. But the government is another question. How to govern it. To make it work, in the same manner it worked before. If it was done under the military government, governed by the military, and you took the same restrictions to get in as you do the military, it possibly could work.

KS: Very good. Well, George, I want to thank you for giving of your time for this interview. You certainly will make our understanding of CCC life a little clearer, and thank you for your service to your country. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]